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## THE CHALLENGE OF EASTER DAY

Easter brings a challenge to every thoughtful man. If Jesus were "raised from the dead," Easter is the great Evangel of days. If Jesus "be not raised from the dead," he is still with the dead, and Easter is a survival worth more to milliners than to men and women who have seen their loved ones die and who themselves read mortality in every turn of the calendar leaf.

Plunge to the heart of this challenge and you will find not anxiety as to whether Jesus after his resurrection—not mere reanimation—ate fish and bread, had flesh and bones, went through closed doors, vanished and reappeared. Such matters mightily concern our estimate of the gospel records, but important as they are, they are still but secondary.

The crucial question is this: Does anybody really know whether Jesus is still living, still man's companion, still our Redeemer?

To call him the Carpenter of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee, the Enthusiast for Humanity may serve on other days, but Easter challenges us to say whether he *is*, not what he *was*. Learned sentences about substance and values may do for days when we turn philosophers; but at Easter we face the Dark Tower and demand a triumphant champion, not a fellow-victim.

Did Jesus conquer death or did death conquer Jesus? Does he exist still himself, or did he go back into some impersonal Whole? An answer to such questions is either a gospel or a summons to another forlorn hope.



It is with joy that the church should answer the challenge of this sacred day. Questions persist, but faith in the central evangel should blaze up anew. Jesus lives; a Redeemer as well as a Teacher; a Saviour as truly as a Prophet!

Sober criticism—not the clever guesses of the knights errant of some philosophy—brings us the irreducible faith of those early friends of his who felt him really present in neither dream nor vision nor spiritual ecstasy. It tells us of the trembling women, the doubting disciples, the five hundred who saw him at once, the indomitable Saul, all ablaze with faith that they had seen the Lord.

True, we do not know its psychology or just the nature of its cause. Our skepticism, born of everyday experience of death, bids us pause and re-examine our evidence, even as we formulate our explanations. But the gospel is glorious in its very dogmatism, inspiring in the very hesitancy of its appeal to science. Our conviction is not credulity, but neither is it agnosticism. Auto-suggestion, mob psychology, extravagant loyalty, do not suffice to explain the faith of the first disciples.

We too can believe that he appeared and is, not only because of what those ancient souls experienced, but also because we too know Him, whom to know aright is life eternal.



And to this evangel of immortality “brought to light” every Easter Day should be consecrated. It is a day for the militant exploiting of an ancient faith reinforced by modern study; a day when with the memory and the experience of a risen Christ we call on men to cease estimating themselves in terms of short-lived economic efficiency and face themselves as eternal souls.

If a man reckons this gospel as of less value than lessons drawn from a butterfly’s coming out of its chrysalis, or moral renewals or social reconstructions, there is probably no way to give him pause.

But for us a risen Christ brings more than a problem. He is an asset. Confidence in his victory brings new confidence in the unwillingness of Love to let its objects cease to be, new courage to follow the path of duty when it leads over some modern Calvary, new impetus to labor that social rights may come to immortal souls rather than to human cogs of the industrial machine; more steadiness in the midst of the unceasing hurry which we call life; more assurance as to that land from whose bourne a Traveler has returned.